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Amendments to Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Claim 1. (currently amended) A method for accessing a compressed image comprising a boot environment and a software image stored on a computer-readable medium, said boot environment and software image comprising a plurality of files combined to reduce file redundancy, said method comprising executing a driver component to perform:

identifying the boot environment in the compressed image, wherein the compressed image comprises a plurality of files;

loading the compressed image as a file system; and

booting from the identified boot environment via the file system by uncompressing at least one of the files associated with the identified boot environment and booting from the identified boot environment via the uncompressed files without storing the uncompressed files in memory.

Claim 2. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising performing one or more of the following: installing a software image on a computer, system preparation, and system maintenance.

Claim 3. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising initializing the identified boot environment.

Claim 4. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

seeking the compressed image on the computer-readable medium; and

initializing the compressed image.

Claim 5. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein executing comprises executing the driver component in the context of a running operating system.

Claim 6. (original) The method of claim 1, further comprising searching for the compressed image and opening the compressed image.

Claim 7. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the driver component is embodied in one or more of the following: software, firmware, and hardware.

Claim 8. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the compressed image includes a header and wherein identifying comprises searching the header for a boot specifier indicating the location of the boot environment on the computer-readable medium.

Claim 9. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the software image comprises an operating system.

Claim 10. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the boot environment comprises a minimal operating system.

Claim 11. (cancelled)

Claim 12. (original) One or more computer-readable media having computer executable instructions for performing the method of claim 1.

Claim 13. (currently amended) A method for accessing a compressed image stored on a computer-readable medium, said compressed image storing descriptive data and file data, said method comprising executing a driver component to perform:

identifying a boot environment in the compressed image via the descriptive data, wherein the compressed image comprises a plurality of files;

loading the compressed image as a file system to provide access to the file data; and

booting from the identified boot environment via the file system by uncompressing at least one of the files associated with the identified boot environment and booting from the identified boot environment via the uncompressed files without storing the uncompressed files in memory.

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Claim 14. (original) The method of claim 13, further comprising performing one or more of the following: installing a software image on a computer, system preparation, and system maintenance.

Claim 15. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein the descriptive data comprises metadata including one or more of the following: a file name, an attribute, a file update time, a compression format, a file location and a stream.

Claim 16. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein the file data comprises binary file data.

Claim 17. (original) The method of claim 13, further comprising initializing the identified boot environment.

Claim 18. (original) The method of claim 13, further comprising:
        seeking the compressed image on the computer-readable medium; and
        initializing the compressed image.

Claim 19. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein executing comprises executing the driver component in the context of a running operating system.

Claim 20. (original) The method of claim 13, further comprising searching for the compressed image and opening the compressed image.

Claim 21. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein the driver component is embodied in one or more of the following: software, firmware, and hardware.

Claim 22. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein the compressed image includes a header and wherein identifying comprises searching the header for a boot specifier indicating the location of the boot environment on the computer-readable medium.

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Claim 23. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein the software image comprises an operating system.

Claim 24. (original) The method of claim 13, wherein the boot environment comprises a minimal operating system.

Claim 25. (cancelled)

Claim 26. (original) One or more computer-readable media having computer executable instructions for performing the method of claim 13.

Claims 27 - 49. (cancelled)